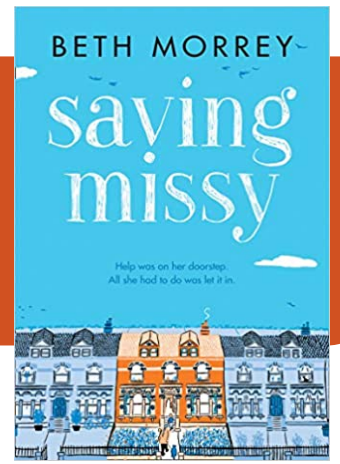




Saving Missy

Beth Morrey



Author Background

Beth Morrey was inspired to write her debut novel, *Saving Missy* (published in the US as *The Love Story of Missy Carmichael*), whilst pushing a pram around her local park during maternity leave. Getting to know the community of dog owners, joggers, neighbours and families, she began to sow the seeds of a novel about a woman saved by the people around her, strangers who became friends.

Previously Creative Director at RDF Television, UK, Beth now writes full time. She was previously shortlisted for the Grazia-Orange First Chapter award, and had her work published in the Cambridge and Oxford May Anthologies while at university.

Beth lives in London with her husband, two sons and a dog named Polly.

Book Summary

The world has changed around seventy-nine-year-old librarian Millicent Carmichael, aka Missy. Though quick to admit that she often found her roles as a housewife and mother less than satisfying, Missy once led a bustling life driven by two children, an accomplished and celebrated husband, and a Classics degree from Cambridge. Now her husband is gone, her daughter is estranged after a shattering argument, and her son has moved to his wife's native Australia, taking Missy's beloved only grandchild half a world away. She spends her days sipping sherry, avoiding people, and rattling around in her oversized, under decorated house waiting for.... what exactly?

The last thing Missy expects is for two perfect strangers and one spirited dog named Bob to break through her prickly exterior and show her just how much love she still has to give. In short order, Missy finds herself in the embrace of an eclectic community that simply won't take no for an answer – including a rambunctious mutt-on-loan, whose unconditional love gives Missy reason to re-enter the world, one muddy paw print at a time.

Discussion Questions

- ❖ Did you like Missy Carmichael when you first met her? Why or why not? How about at the end?
- ❖ Missy's life is entirely transformed by her chance meeting with Sylvie and Angela. Why doesn't Missy like Angela at first? Does Missy's opinion change as she gets to know her? How do these two women reshape the way Missy understands her community?
- ❖ Is there someone in your life who has forced you to step out of your comfort zone? How did you feel about this person at first? Did your opinion change over time? What did you learn when you took a risk?
- ❖ Why doesn't Missy want to take Bobby? What changes? How does the dog help Missy to see her life differently?
- ❖ Were you surprised by the choice Missy makes in 1956? Why doesn't she tell Leo? How does this choice affect the rest of her life? What does she think about this choice now that she's eighty?
- ❖ Discuss Leo's character. How does Missy see him? Do you think this is how others see him too? How did he change over the course of his marriage to Missy? Was he a good husband?
- ❖ Missy thinks about the concept of *oikos*. What does this concept mean? Why is it important to Missy? Do you feel *oikos* plays a role in your own life? Why or why not?
- ❖ Why don't Missy or Mel get along? How do Sylvie, Angela, Otis and Bobby help Missy to see her daughter in a new light?
- ❖ Missy thinks "Sometimes the loneliness was overpowering. Not just the immediate loneliness of living in a huge house on my own, loved ones far away, but a more abstract, galactic isolation." What does she mean? Do you think there are different kinds of loneliness?
- ❖ Why does Missy dread her seventy-ninth birthday? Do you agree with the saying that "age is just a number"? Why or why not? What do you think is different about looking for a fresh start in old age? How does Missy's story change the way you think about finding love?

References

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